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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

REFOCUSING INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO
COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

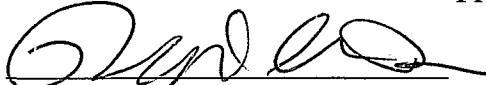
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
DISCLAIMER	ii
PREFACE	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE INDUSTRIAL WAR MILITARY INTELLIGENCE PARADIGM.....	2
III. THE RMA, INTELLIGENCE, AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.....	4
IV. WAR, ONE INDIVIDUAL AT A TIME	6
V. BEATING THE INSURGENT AT HIS OWN GAME.....	9
VI. INTELLIGENCE ON THE ENEMY	10
VII. INTELLIGENCE ON SOCIAL ELITES	14
VIII. INTELLIGENCE ON EVERYONE ELSE	17
IX. CHANGES TO MARINE CORPS INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT.....	19
X. CONCLUSION	21

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PREFACE

The impetus for this thesis was my experience in Iraq from May 2005 to March 2006 as the Operations Officer for 3rd Radio Battalion in support of II MEF. My battalion arrived shortly after Operation AL FAJR, the second Battle of Fallujah and stayed through the Iraqi Constitutional Referendum and National Election. We supported Regimental Combat Team 2, Regimental Combat Team 8, and Brigade Combat Team 2/28 with Signals Intelligence throughout the Al Anbar Province. While the Marines worked exceptionally hard from day one, the first few months of the deployment, they saw very little success. Sensing this, 3rd Radio Battalion's Commanding Officer, LtCol. Robert "Bill" Coate developed a program to re-focus our collection and analysis effort. He called the program "CARNIVORE." It was a methodology that selectively targeted individual insurgents we could both find, affect, and whose elimination would cause a significant disruption for the insurgent groups in Al Anbar. Project CARNIVORE's concept of intelligence support provides the basis for this thesis.

This paper is dedicated to:

- LtCol Coate, for much of what I know about intelligence and also much of what I know about being a good Marine officer, husband, and father.
- SgtMaj Fineran, who understands that modern warfare is all about people – ours, the enemy's, and those in between. You have to respect them all if you want to win.
- Anyone who has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, or anywhere else where people shoot at you.
- My kids, who get dragged all over the world and never lose their sense of humor.
- My wife – for everything.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Refocusing Intelligence Support to Counterinsurgency

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Thesis: Defeating an insurgency will require precise intelligence concerning the “cognitive terrain” where we will engage the enemy, the social elites, and the general population.

Discussion: In the coming decades, America’s enemies will challenge the United States’ formidable military through the routine use of irregular and asymmetrical attacks. Each of these attacks will have both a military and an informational object. The military effects of these attacks will likely be small but the informational aspect may be decisive. Success by our enemies will both weaken the American public’s resolve while simultaneously increase support for the insurgent.

Today’s conflicts are for popular support. Both the legitimate government and the insurgency exist due to support from the population and thus winning these kinds of wars depends extensively on controlling people, both as individuals and within groups. The military has always had a thorough appreciation of physical terrain, but in today’s wars, appreciation of “cognitive terrain” will prove more decisive. “Cognitive terrain” may consist of history, race, ethnicity, religion, wealth, or any other number of factors. It may prove exceptionally difficult for an outsider to understand people of other cultures, but it is not impossible. Recent events in Al Anbar Province serve as an example.

In 2006, U.S. forces finally wrested control of the civilian population from Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQIZ) in large part due to the cooperation of sheiks and the acquiescence of the population. The key factor in this “awakening” was the actions of coalition commanders who understood the culture, the situation of individual sheiks, and the plight of the common Iraqi and then offered them a better deal. This success, however, was less due to a focused effort by the intelligence community and more due to what operational commanders learned through their own study or trial and error. The intelligence community, in the future, must support commanders seeking to understand the people whom they fight against, with, and amongst¹. The intelligence concept of support contained in this thesis proposes a way to do so.

Conclusion: The source of strength for an insurgent is the civilian population. His control over the people gives him both intelligence and counterintelligence superiority over the legitimate government. Counterinsurgents, however, can defeat the insurgent if they target the same population and then succeed in drawing them to the side of the government. Conducting focused intelligence collection and analysis against elements of the enemy forces, local leadership, and the general population will allow counterinsurgency operational commanders to win efficiently and consistently.

I. INTRODUCTION

America's recent fights against insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan constitute "business as usual" for the United States Marine Corps. For over 233 years, Marines have participated in hundreds of similar operations in every clime and place. While an established tradition for the Marines, this act of landing on a foreign shore and then conducting a limited military action in support of limited political objectives has never been easy. These fights, whether called "small wars", "irregular operations", or "savage wars of peace,"² bear little resemblance to the conventional view of war and they require vastly different skills from its participants. Small wars, unlike the massive applications of firepower of an industrial war, are fought with, among, and against individuals and groups of the population. Winning these conflicts will require American intelligence organizations at all levels to better understand them, not as in the past, as opposing uniforms or icons on a computer, but rather as human beings with independent wills and differing agendas.

The demise of the Soviet Union and the increasingly technical nature of weapons systems mean that very few countries retain the capability to challenge the United States using military force. We should assume, then, that those who would oppose our policies will, at least for the immediate future, use unconventional attacks. It should not surprise military professionals that, with perfect predictability, thinking opponents have always used "unconventional" attacks against militarily superior enemies. Our enemies do so either to support their more conventional military operations or as a means unto themselves. In fact, *unconventional* from a large military perspective might be considered *conventional* by a smaller, less technically sophisticated opponent. While these attacks have always been deadly for the immediate participants, their small size and consequence never directly forced a change in policy.

Today's world, more than ever before in history, is immensely interconnected and informed. The minor, annoying attacks of yesteryear, therefore take on a new importance. The global media broadcasts each attack to a worldwide audience. Individuals sitting behind their televisions then estimate its effects, evaluate the righteousness of the act, and extrapolate who they think might win the conflict. One small attack then, has an insignificant effect on the military but an immense effect on individuals who witness it, either directly or on the nightly news. In countries like the United States, these individuals dictate (albeit indirectly) foreign policy. In countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, these individuals become recruits for one side or the other. Insurgents understand this dynamic and seek every opportunity to exploit it. It is a time-tested method and one that is immensely difficult to counter.

The classic insurgent techniques of limited military war combined with political warfare against the population can be defeated. To do so, however, will take a significant change in the way in which the U.S. intelligence community supports counterinsurgency operations. These changes will certainly require reorganizing, retraining, and re-equipping the U.S. intelligence community. While briefly touched on in Chapter IX, a thorough analysis and generation of conclusions and recommendations far exceed the scope of this thesis. The following pages instead attempt to explain, first how the military intelligence community found itself so poorly prepared for modern war and, second how it might refocus its efforts to better support the operations certain to occur in the next decades. It is hoped that this work will form a small, but solid, foundation for future research in intelligence support to counterinsurgency warfare.

II. THE INDUSTRIAL WAR MILITARY INTELLIGENCE PARADIGM

Beginning in the late 1980s, a new concept swept through the Department of Defense. Well-respected think tanks and senior military leaders, and defense contractors alike began to

talk about a phenomenon they called the “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA). These groups had all tracked accelerating advances in technology and began to see how a combination of key capabilities might lead to a revolution in the way in which American forces conducted war. They proposed that the Internet, Global Positioning Satellites (GPS), precision guided munitions, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), nanotechnology, and other technologies might allow the military to fight, and definitively defeat, any enemy while almost eliminating all risk to Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines. It was a seductive idea – the promise of a “bloodless” war – and the RMA theory continued to mature through the last years of the Cold War. It gained momentum both within the services, who rewrote doctrine to incorporate its tenets, and within congress, which supported it via appropriations for procurement of new systems.

The Soviet Union never saw the results of the RMA but, in 1991, an unsuspecting Saddam Hussein did. The stunning success of Operation DESERT STORM, complete with videos from TV-guided bombs, footage of Iraqi soldiers surrendering to UAVs, and SCUD shoot-downs by Patriot missiles, seemed to entirely validate RMA as a modern way to conduct warfare. War, it seemed, had finally fundamentally changed to the advantage of the United States and other technologically sophisticated countries.

One organization that clearly benefited from the RMA was the intelligence community. New technologies, acquired under the auspices of the RMA, included incredibly sophisticated and expensive sensors that provided previously impossible observation of our enemies’ activities. This detailed information from remoted sensors and satellites could now be captured without risk to American lives or any of the other risks previously associated with eavesdropping or physical observation. At the same time, a corresponding growth in global communications networks enabled the delivery of immense amounts of digitized information nearly

instantaneously to military commanders anywhere in the world. To professional warfighters, who had spent decades fighting their enemy based on verbal reports and map sketches, this new capability appeared a panacea – an “unblinking eye³” fixed upon their enemy.

For two decades billions of dollars poured into this intelligence system of systems. As national and tactical intelligence organizations expanded, reorganized, and retrained to consume and maximize the usefulness of this new information, more traditional methods of intelligence collection quickly disappeared. A good example of this “evolution” was Headquarters Marine Corps’ deletion of the 0251 (Interrogator / Debriefing) Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) from the service in the 1990s. Marines with this MOS had previously provided commanders with intelligence on local characters, cultures, and conditions that they had developed from prisoner interrogations and the debriefing of friendly patrols⁴. After DESERT STORM, their skills seemed almost quaint compared to satellite imagery, communications intercept, and other sophisticated remote sensing techniques. By the turn of the century, intelligence had clearly become an issue of *things* rather than people and, by September 2001, the United States had built a system optimized to find and report on the activities and intentions of large armored formations maneuvering across the plains of eastern Germany (or the deserts of Iraq) and an intelligence cadre prepared to dutifully count, track, and report each and every tank, armored personnel carrier, and artillery piece.

III. THE RMA, INTELLIGENCE, AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

American-led coalition forces crossed the anti-tank berm between Kuwait and Iraq at approximately 1 a.m. on 20 March 2003. Twenty-one days later, Saddam Hussein’s entire military, to include his elite Republican Guard units, had been soundly defeated. The American military, it seemed, had a second consecutive validation of the RMA; another spectacular victory

with minimal friendly casualties. Again, the United States' investment in intelligence also proved its worth. According to commanders, military intelligence provided unprecedented support during the Army and Marines' "March to Baghdad." For three weeks, intelligence analysts tracked and targeted enemy units and weapons systems and then provided minute-by-minute updates to maneuver forces. Iraqi Army units quickly learned that standing to fight meant staying to die.

The only real difficulty for the coalition during their unequivocal triumph was a running fight Marines and Soldiers had with a group called "Fedayeen Saddam." Fedayeen Saddam were lightly armed irregulars organized and led by Uday Hussein. They were modeled after Hezbollah's *Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* ("The Islamic Resistance") army and members had to prove their loyalty to Saddam Hussein. When American units crossed into Iraq, they not only stood and fought but also threatened to kill any Iraqi soldier who seemed ready to surrender or flee the battlefield. They fought as individuals or small groups, without uniforms, and usually from villagers' homes, mosques, schools, or hospitals.⁵ They would fight American combat units, if forced to, but preferred to ambush supply convoys, support personnel, and other "soft" targets. When cornered, they would hide their weapons and blend back into the civilian population. Their appearance on the battlefield caused a nightmare for the military intelligence community. To an outsider, all Iraqis in 2003 looked the same and all Iraqi civilians were not to be trusted. Finding and tracking Fedayeen Saddam in these circumstances proved almost impossible.

By the summer of 2003 American military intelligence units had shifted their attention to redeploying out of Iraq and back to the United States. The war in Iraq had been almost a complete success for the community. Intelligence collection systems had worked well and there

were few glitches in getting this information quickly to the operational units where it could be used. Those who remembered the Fedayeen Saddam chalked them up as an annoying anomaly, one which they were glad to leave behind. This kind of intelligence work clearly called for a system vastly different than the RMA-enhanced military juggernaut they possessed.

IV. WAR, ONE INDIVIDUAL AT A TIME

Five years of constant fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan later, American military professionals have concluded that armies organized, trained, and equipped to fight another conventional military require significant modifications to succeed in counterinsurgencies. The RMA was successful because it assumed the United States would face another nation state in a military-against-military war. In these situations, military effects are paramount. Metrics such as materiel destroyed, enemy casualties, prisoners of war captured, and terrain controlled do, in fact, ultimately determine the success or failure of the effort. The destruction of one tank or airplane, because of its extreme expense and slow manufacture, will greatly affect the enemy's overall military capability for the extent of the war. Likewise, the enemy also has difficulty quickly replacing his highly trained soldiers when they are killed or critically wounded. In a conventional war, then, one wins by simply attriting the enemy to a point where he no longer has a military capability willing or capable of defending its government. This can either be done directly by attrition warfare, or indirectly by maneuver warfare⁶.

Unlike conventional war, our enemy in an insurgency is not another nation state and they do not employ expensive weapons to destroy or highly trained soldiers to capture or kill. Insurgents, the leadership and the foot soldier alike, are individuals driven by individual reasons to combat the government. These reasons may include political dissatisfaction, economic unhappiness, ethnic hatred, or simply a penchant for adventure. Because insurgents require little

or no training and because they do not rely on sophisticated weapons, they can appear and disappear overnight. Every member of the civilian population, thus, can easily become an insurgent, even old men, women, and children. Because everyone in the population is capable of waging war against the legitimate government, the insurgency leadership has a large, almost limitless, pool of potential recruits.

As diverse as the insurgents' motivations may be, occasionally they group together either for a common cause or because they find they have better effect as a group. These groups can appear and dissolve nearly instantaneously. They can be formal or informal (e.g. a political party vs. an ad hoc business cooperative) and may form for either practical or esoteric reasons (e.g. a law firm vs. a religious sect). Sometimes groups have both a legitimate and an illegitimate purpose. Because members of a group congregate based on shared values, shared objectives, shared grievances, or other similar interests, they have a characteristic of acting predictably under certain circumstances. They also have a leader who both intimately understands the beliefs and norms of the group and directs the group's behavior. In many ways these groups are like armies. Unlike armies, however, people in these groups retain their individuality. They can easily move between groups or even out of the group entirely.

Insurgent leaders are simply leaders of a group and they realize their cause relies entirely on popular support. With the aid of the population, an insurgency can never end for regardless of the counterinsurgent's success, new individuals will continually step up to replace insurgents killed or captured. While the number of potential recruits available to the insurgent confounds the counterinsurgent, a government's loss of popular support poses even a greater problem.

During the Chinese revolution, Mao Tse-tung opined that "the people are like water and the army is like fish."⁷ This maxim perfectly illustrates the totality of reliance an insurgent has

on the population. The practice of coercing or convincing the population to join the insurgent's cause forms the foundation for every revolutionary movement. As mentioned before, the people provide him his recruits. They also provide him his food, his shelter, and his medical care. More importantly, they provide him his intelligence and his counterintelligence without which he would be blind, both in the attack and in the defense.

Regardless of size, the active insurgents alone cannot constantly and completely monitor the counterinsurgent actions. He can, however, enlist large numbers of the population to watch government forces and report their disposition. This is how the insurgent knows of his opportunities to strike. Given perfect intelligence, he will do so only when completely to his advantage. Similarly, he must ensure he is never attacked while at a disadvantage. While light weapons and little training make the insurgent flexible and elusive on the offense, it also makes him extremely vulnerable when faced with the government's highly trained and heavily armed military forces. For this reason getting the population to not support the government also constitutes an absolute necessary condition for the survival of an irregular group. Their very existence relies entirely on the acquiescence of the population and their refusal to report them to the government. So underlying the observable aspects of a counterinsurgency is another struggle – a battle for intelligence – typically waged among the civilian population one individual at a time or against small groups. The insurgent must commit himself to it fully for he knows that when he loses his control of the population, he has lost his intelligence superiority, and when he has lost intelligence superiority, he has lost the war. The people, then, are the insurgent's center of gravity and this is where the counterinsurgent must apply maximum effort.

V. BEATING THE INSURGENT AT HIS OWN GAME

The insurgent draws his strength from the population. This simple tenet of irregular warfare presents the military commander with an awkward and complicated dilemma. Unlike in conventional war, winning here will require much more than a massive and coordinated application of firepower to attrite the opposition for the counterinsurgent also draws his strength from the population. His ultimate goal is to build trust in the government and thus must find some way to attack the insurgent without harming or otherwise alienating members of the population. In successful counterinsurgencies, the counterinsurgent does this by separating the enemy from his support base either physically or emotionally.

In 2007, the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps jointly published a publication simply called *Counterinsurgency*. This document outlines best practices for combating insurgencies under many different circumstances. Drawing from historical sources as well as recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, the authors propose that a successful counterinsurgency goes through three steps⁸:

- “Stopping the bleeding” – protecting the population, stopping the insurgents’ momentum, and setting the conditions for engagement.
- “Recovery” – developing host nation capabilities, expanding governance, and providing essential services, and stimulating economic development.
- “Movement to Self-Sufficiency” – Decrease in foreign assistance, rule of law, and proven legitimacy of the government.

Succeeding quickly in the first two stages is absolutely critical if the war is to be won without extremely large amounts of time, men, and materiel. In an expeditionary operation, the United States should expect little initial help from the legitimate government once it declares a crisis.

Without large scale host-nation support, American troops must quickly address the task of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the local culture, politics, social order, economics, and religion with only organic expertise. This task is predominately that of the embarked or deployed intelligence organization.

Appreciation of the physical environment, weather, and enemy has always been the responsibility of the intelligence officer. In both conventional and unconventional conflicts, the commander is interested in how all three attributes affect his capability to conduct offensive operations. Insurgencies, however, also include a need to understand "cognitive terrain." To succeed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the future irregular conflicts certain to follow, the Marine intelligence officer will need to understand the nature of people of three major types: the enemy, who fights him directly; the people, who must choose a side to support; and the leaders, who influence both.

VI. INTELLIGENCE ON THE ENEMY

In a typical scenario, an insurgent group seeks to overthrow the legitimate government by proving its inability to provide for the population, its unfairness to elements of the population, its corruption or any other number of injustices or inabilities. For this reason, the insurgent poses a direct threat to the stability, even the very existence, of the government. To prevent these negative effects, the government needs to identify him, track him, monitor him, and possibly arrest him. Another means the insurgent uses to further this agenda is to attack visible aspects of the government, including the military, using violence. For this reason, the government may need to kill him before he has a chance to attack.

While the ultimate objective of the counterinsurgent is winning control over the population, one must never get so engaged with civil affairs missions that he ignores the enemy.

The insurgent must be relentlessly pursued in order to ensure the safety of the government forces but, just as importantly, to protect innocent civilians from his intimidation or coercion, and to prevent him from spreading his anti-government message to the impressionable population. In some ways, intelligence collection on the enemy seems most like the tasks done in conventional war. The insurgent, however, is very different than an opposing army. His very life relies on his secrecy and so he gives it his greatest effort. The counterinsurgent, for this reason, must address the intelligence collection effort with substantially more sophistication.

Gathering intelligence on extremely secretive organizations is immensely difficult when using a traditional intelligence approach. The typical methods for finding the enemy, unraveling his organization, or identifying his leadership consists of direct electronic or human surveillance or the interrogation of captured or "turned" insurgents. Of course the enemy expects these measures and takes active measures to thwart them. Lucien Bodard, in *The Quicksand War*, describes the frustration of French units during the First Indochina War.

Patrols went out on reconnaissance, but they did not push far enough, to the places that mattered for that would mean destruction. If prisoners were taken during these raids, they never knew anything, even if they could be induced to talk, not even the names of their officers or the numbers of their unit. This was often a genuine ignorance, for nothing had a name in the Vietminh army; or if it did, then it was a false name, and often changed.⁹

Obviously, with the operational security of the insurgent so well in place, one must look for another means of exploiting his network.

Insurgent groups vary so much in their organization, command structure, and control mechanisms that it would be difficult to do more than generalize a typical structure. Even this gross generalization, however, proves useful. Insurgencies have three large classes of insurgents (See Figure 1). The lower class consists of "foot soldiers," drawn from disaffected youth, the insane, thrill seekers, the uneducated, petty criminals, and other groups with little to lose by

joining the insurgency. The upper class of insurgents is the group's leadership. They have the most to win if the group usurps the legitimate government, they direct the military and the political effort, and their very existence ensures the continuity of the movement. The last group is the middle class. This group consists of "white collar" insurgents or the insurgent "middle class." These individuals join the insurgency for more tangible reasons than simply needing a job and they bring desperately needed skills and resources. Some examples of "white collar" insurgents are bankers, communications technicians, lawyers, engineers, and logisticians. Each member of these three groups, leadership, middle class, and foot soldiers, is essential to the insurgency, but they are not all equally essential.

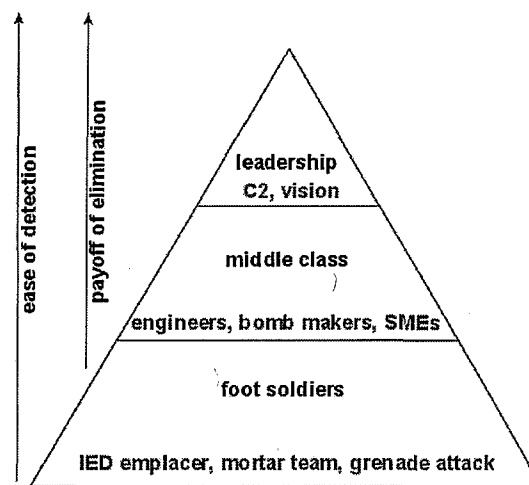


Figure 1: Classes of Insurgents

The first group of insurgents, the "foot soldiers," perform a variety of missions, offensive and defensive, military and political and they constitute a real, albeit small, threat to the military. Due to the lack of training they receive and the limited value of any information they might give away, they generally practice poor operational security (OPSEC). Additionally, because they conduct overt attacks against the government or the population, they present nearly constant opportunities for detection by intelligence sensors (either human or electronic). Finding and

tracking the insurgent “foot soldiers” is easy and, given this quality intelligence, operational forces find them just as easy to capture or kill. Unfortunately, this largest group is also the easiest for the insurgent to repopulate. Their limited knowledge, skill, influence, and individual worth to the insurgency makes them a poor return on the overall investment in time and other intelligence resources.

The second group of insurgents of interest is the group’s leadership. Because they provide the guidance and often the inspiration for the insurgency, their capture or death would have a disproportionate effect on the entire war. They realize this fact too, however, and so adopt extraordinary OPSEC measures to protect themselves from detection. They minimize contact with others, do not use communications devices of any kind, move frequently, and leave multiple false trails to frustrate their pursuers. The intelligence challenge for finding the insurgent leadership is one of finite resources. Finding a single individual might consume all of the resources of the intelligence community for months or years while other missions go unsupported.

The last group of insurgents is the insurgent “middle class.” This group provides the insurgency with vital expertise in accomplishing any attack more complicated than a simple assault. They make and design new kinds of bombs, find ways to skirt detection of the flow of illegal funds, act as interpreters between different groups, and secretly move people and equipment around the battlefield. Because of their peculiar skills, the loss of one individual can significantly disrupt an insurgent group’s operations until a replacement can be found. Unlike the leadership of the group, however, they are susceptible for detection by intelligence sensors. These individuals, in order to accomplish their missions or tasks, must interact with other people

either face-to-face or over a communications device. They represent a realistic collection for intelligence and a worthwhile target for the operational commander.

Capturing, killing, or coercing members of the insurgency “middle class” is where the intelligence community must focus its efforts and resources during a counterinsurgency. If the government can eliminate its members faster than the enemy can replace them, the insurgency will start to lose its capability to conduct anything more than simplistic attacks. This reduction in violence will then allow the government to move onto more long-term strategies for ending, rather than simply suppressing, the insurgency.

VII. INTELLIGENCE ON SOCIAL ELITES

Social elites constitute the most critical demographic to the government during all phases of irregular wars but especially during the early stages when the full scope of the problem is undetermined and immediate security requirements vastly exceed the government’s resources. Depending on the environment, the social elites of a community might include politicians, academia, religious leaders, or prominent local businessmen. It may include other formal and informal leadership such as criminals, gang leaders, chieftains, or warlords. While these individuals may not oppose the legitimate government, their influence over large portions of the population makes them an important target for friendly influence. The intelligence community has not typically targeted them for collection in the past since they often cannot be classified as “enemy.” During a war for influence, however, understanding their agendas and manipulating them may mean the difference between success and failure.

The Marine Corps’ handbook for irregular warfare, *Small Wars Manual*, points out the usefulness of local social elites during its narrative on the responsibilities of the intelligence officer. The authors point out “in many cases [local businessmen] are dependent upon the

intervening forces for protection of their personnel and property, and it is to their advantage to restore peaceful conditions as rapidly as possible.¹⁰ They encourage the use of these influential and powerful individuals as they have the most to lose from the overthrow of the legitimate government. They also have the most ability to influence people, either because they control resources or because they implement an extra-governmental system of patronage. In an expeditionary operation, quickly recognizing these sources of power and influence and targeting them for intelligence collection may prove essential to an effective intervention.

One finds an excellent practical example of social elite management in the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program during the Vietnam War. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began the CIDG program in 1961 as an effort to rally the indigenous people of the central highlands of South Vietnam against the Viet Cong. Tribes such as the Montagnards had historically suffered oppression and discrimination by both the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese government because of their different ethnicity and because of their primitive lifestyle. To engage the tribes the CIA used Army Special Forces soldiers. These soldiers, educated on tribal loyalties, history, customs, and traditions, went into the jungle and negotiated with the chiefs. Once the U.S. Government delivered on promises to the chief, the chief's prestige increased and, as the chief's prestige increased, his commitment to the mission of denying his lands to the Viet Cong increased correspondingly. By 1964, the CIDG had recruited several hundred village chiefs in the Central Highlands who fielded over 50,000 irregular soldiers from their tribes. While these men fought against the communists out of loyalty to their chief, and not because of affection for the South Vietnamese government, the end result was the same. Critical areas of South Vietnam were denied to the enemy.¹¹

No discussion of the influence of social elites and the importance of intelligence

in understanding them would be complete without discussing the recent “Anbar Awakening” in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. In 2006, under the charismatic stewardship of Sheik Abdul Sattar Al-Rishawi, tribal leaders across the province bonded together to expel Al Qaeda fighters from their cities. In this case, cooperation between these sheiks and coalition forces translated directly into tangible results. Police recruitment went from almost zero to over 5,400 in one month. Attacks went from an average of fifty per day to just under four per day.¹² While much of the impetus for the Awakening came from Al Qaeda in Iraq’s brutality and their disrespect for the sheiks, another important aspect was the engagement of key sheiks by coalition forces in Al Anbar. Like in Vietnam, the legitimate government was able to seduce influential social elites into supporting them not because they necessarily supported the government, but because they offered a more attractive deal.

Social elites offer two advantages to the intelligence community. The first aspect deals with opportunity for collection. Because social elites (those not considered as “enemy”) constitute non-committed parties in the conflict, they do not take strict OPSEC measures. They usually generate their influence from constant communication, either one-to-one or with a group, public appearances, and the conduct of business. Each of these events can be considered a collection opportunity. The second aspect deals with importance. As mentioned previously, leaders of groups represent the collective values of the group and determine the collective actions of the group and understanding the motivations of the leadership allows operational commanders opportunities to guide their behavior. In economic terms, collecting on social elites has an excellent cost to benefit ratio.

Irregular wars revolve around politics. The seduction, neutralization, or elimination of social elites constitutes an extension of those politics. In most circumstances, each side understands that the other side has an agenda and cooperates without naïveté or false expectations. Both groups carefully weigh direct and indirect costs and benefits before agreeing to any collaboration. Negotiating under these circumstances typically do not favor the legitimate government. They must overtly state their agenda and any broken promises lead to disenchantment or distrust in the government. Social elites, however, have varied motives and do not feel constrained by any laws or agendas but their own. Intelligence can level the playing field between the government and the social elites. While the social elites may not constitute a full-fledged enemy, in counterinsurgencies, gentlemen must read other gentlemen's mail.¹³

Cooperation and engagement with social elites usually provides the legitimate government its quickest way to stability. By extrapolation, it also allows for quick rebuilding of infrastructure, the return to rule of law, and positive government influence over the general population. In some circumstances, intelligence reveals that leadership the daily control of anti-government groups come from this highly influential group of individuals. Only by making these important individuals targets for intelligence collection can the legitimate government understand their agendas, capabilities, and intentions and then take active measures to enlist, emasculate, or eliminate them.

VIII. INTELLIGENCE ON EVERYONE ELSE

As mentioned previously, an insurgency is a political war and as such, the population constitutes the center of gravity for both the irregular fighter and the legitimate government. Bernard Fall says in his introduction to Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare*, "military tactics and hardware are all well and good, but they are really quite useless if one has lost the confidence of

the population among whom one is fighting.¹⁴ While this basic tenet of counterinsurgency appears to place the civilian population in a position of power, paradoxically, it actually makes them the victims of both sides of the conflict. Trinquier eloquently describes the desperate plight of the population during an insurgency.

In the street, at work, at home, the citizen lives continually under the threat of violent death. In the presence of this permanent danger surrounding him, he has the depressing feeling of being an isolated and defenseless target. The fact that public authority and the police are no longer capable of ensuring his security adds to his distress. He loses confidence in the state whose inherent mission it is to guarantee his safety. He is more and more drawn to the side of the terrorists, who alone are able to protect him.¹⁵

The insurgent clearly understands the miserable plight of the average citizen and uses this knowledge to take actions that de-legitimize the government, intimidate individuals who might support the government, and convince as many as possible of its right and ability to lead. Using American parlance, the irregular fighter conducts a war for “hearts and minds.” This does not mean the enemy wants the population to like him or even necessarily believe in his cause. “Winning hearts,” David Kilcullen explains in his *Twenty-Eight Articles*, means convincing the population that they are better off with you than the other side and “winning minds” means they believe you can protect them and the other side cannot.¹⁶

For the intelligence community, the civilian population must receive a collection and analysis effort similar to that of the enemy and the social elites. As mentioned earlier, intelligence must still be collected on the enemy but attrition warfare against an irregular enemy does not win the war; it merely buys breathing space. Once the counterinsurgent achieves this breathing space, however, he must fill it with “armed social work.”¹⁷ Insurgencies do not start in a vacuum, but rather grow from social injustices, political disenfranchisement, and poverty. Efficiently meeting the basic needs and, later, the higher-order needs requires understanding the

environment beyond simplistic cultural “do’s and don’ts.” This is the most important job of the intelligence officer in irregular warfare, for despite its apparent lack of immediate worth to friendly forces, this is this mission that will ultimately win the war for the government.

The information gathered in support of infrastructure development, social programs, and political reconciliation between the population and the government does not, on the surface, initially appear worthy of the immense effort it takes to collect it. For the intelligence community, however, the successful completion of projects intelligently designed to win the loyalty of the population leads to an exponential increase in information from locals. This shift in loyalties represents ultimate success for the counterinsurgent. The population, upon which the insurgent depends for everything, will start to either allow or help the counterinsurgent “detect all infiltration against our territory and discover who are those indispensable to the enemy’s preparation of his projected offensive action. The inhabitants will know them, since they suffer terribly from their activities...” Winning the population robs the insurgent of both his intelligence capability and his counterintelligence capability leaving him incapable of conducting offensive operations and constantly vulnerable to arrest or death.

IX. CHANGES TO MARINE CORPS INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT

At the time of the writing of this thesis, the Marine Corps appears to be making positive changes in its approach to intelligence support to counterinsurgencies. Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) deploying to Iraq are scaling back on massive, centralized, intelligence fusion centers dependent on satellite-based sensors, UAVs, and other technologies in exchange for company-level intelligence cells. These Marines, infantrymen detailed from a deploying battalion and trained in intelligence analysis, live and work in the area where the intelligence is both generated and consumed. The battalions, disintegrated into smaller units, spread out across

the area of operations allowing for regular and intimate contact with the population. They quickly sort the local Iraqis into enemy, social elites, and general population and they understand the wants, fears, and hopes of the people because they see, smell, and talk to them every day. This is the kind of intelligence that allows operational commanders to protect their force and win the counterinsurgency.

This strategy has worked well in past counterinsurgencies. In Algiers, for example, the French used conventional military forces as police in the contested areas outside Algiers. Their sustained presence and genuine concern for the residents in their controlled areas led to unprecedented cooperation between citizens tired of being terrorized and the legitimate government trying to suppress the terrorists. Colonel Gilles Martin describes the process as follows:

At the lowest level, an infantry company controlled a few villages and a couple thousand inhabitants... Sustained contact created a strong personal bond between the people and "their" company. Once trust had been established, the company formed village self-defense units, called *harkas*, which worked with the French to seek out and destroy rebels.¹⁸

The military also seems to be acknowledging the vital importance of having more than a rudimentary skill in cultural understanding or an ability to read "cognitive terrain" before attempting to deal with the general population or social elites. Currently this requirement for analysis and advising is done by U.S. Army Human Terrain Teams (HTTs). They have become a vital contributor to the commander's situational understanding. HTTs, however, are a Band-Aid only, until a robust and capable force exists within the force. This is clearly the mission of the Intelligence MOS Soldier or Marine. The HTT requirement will not go away when America leaves Iraq and Afghanistan but with proper training and experience, individuals with military intelligence MOSs can easily meet it.

Other necessary organizational changes either exist on paper but not in practice or have not begun at all. While a detailed discussion of these issues is outside the scope of this thesis, certain concepts seem immediately apparent:

- Intel must focus on the people and the associated “cognitive terrain”
- Tactical units need linguistic expertise in significant numbers
- USMC requires broad cultural expertise to include in-country experience
- USMC requires individuals with training in psychology (e.g. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs)
- Intelligence collectors should be placed at lowest possible level (platoon, company)

X. CONCLUSION

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the world into individuals and small groups should have signaled the ultimate triumph of liberalism¹⁹. Instead, it ushered in an era of power jockeying to see who would control the pieces. On one side is the government who ostensibly has the best interest of its population at heart. On the other is the insurgent, seeking to exploit the government’s weakness to further his agenda. Caught in the middle is the population. Today the United States finds itself embroiled in two of these conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Given the current state of the world, we can expect to face more similar situations in the near future. It is both a dreadful circumstance and a monumental opportunity.

Many people of the world have an opportunity for political, social, and economic self-determination for the first time in history. They are looking to the United States as a model. They are also looking for our help to thwart those who would deny them this chance. For this reason, America must win its counterinsurgency fights. This will be done by saving those that

deserve to be saved, supporting those that deserve supporting, and killing those that deserve to be killed. Only intelligence based on a solid appreciation of "cognitive terrain" will enable us to tell the difference.

Endnotes

¹ The term "war amongst the people" was coined in Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: the Art of War in the Modern World*, (New York, NY: Vintage, 2008).

² Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" *McClure's Magazine* (Feb. 1899).

³ Gen Chiarelli had a different take on persistent surveillance. He stated "my unblinking eye is 7 million people in Baghdad." Gen Chiarelli quoted in Top Iraq Rebels Elude Intensified U.S. Raids; Military Shifts to More Selective Targeting, Feb 15, 2005, Bradley Graham

⁴ 560/02 MARADMIN 560/02 : MOS 0251, Interrogator/Debriefers are created by lateral move from any MOS. They collect information/intelligence from human sources by means of interrogation, debriefing, and screening. They translate and exploit foreign language documents and recordings. In addition to knowing a foreign country's language, they are familiar with the area and the customs and traditions of its peoples. Typical duties are screening and interrogation of enemy POWs, line crossers, refugees, and other displaced persons, exploiting foreign language documents, and participating in noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO).

⁵ Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today*, (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2006), 293.

⁶ Maneuver warfare consists of placing your forces in such an advantageous position that they *could* inflict massive attrition on the enemy unless he surrenders. One can consider maneuver warfare a variation of attrition warfare rather than something radically different.

⁷ Reputedly published in Mao Tse-Tung's *Aspects of China's Anti-Japanese Struggle*.

⁸ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, D.C. Department of the Army, 2007), 5-2.

⁹ Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam* (London: Little Brown and Company, 1967), 161.

¹⁰ United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 25.

¹¹ The definitive account of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group's early years is Colonel Francis J. Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961 – 1971*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1985).

¹² Bill Roggio, "Anbar Rising," *The Long War Journal*, 11 May 2007, accessed via the Internet at www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/anbar_rising.php, downloaded on 2 March 2008.

¹³ In 1929, Henry L. Stimson as Secretary of State under President Herbert Hoover, closed down MI-8 (the United States Department of State's Cryptanalytic office) after he was briefed on its existence. MI-8, or "Yardley's Black Chamber" had successfully intercepted and decoded Japanese diplomatic communiqués during the Washington Naval Conference in 1920-21. Having this "insider information" allowed the United States and Great Britain to negotiate extremely favorable terms for their countries during the conference.

¹⁴ Bernard Fall in intro to Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964).

¹⁵ Trinquier, 16-17.

¹⁶ Kilcullen, 105.

¹⁷ Kilcullen, 106.

¹⁸ Colonel Gilles Martin, French Army, "War in Algeria: The French Experience," *Military Review* (July – August 2005), 56.

¹⁹ The use of the word "liberalism" here refers to freedom of choice, individual rights, and equality of opportunity not "social liberalism."